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(54) **ORIGANUM PLANT NAMED ‘ZORBA WHITE’**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A distinct cultivar of Origanum plant named ‘Zorba White’, characterized by its compact and low spreading plant habit; freely branching growth habit; aromatic dark green foliage; and white-colored flowers subtended by light green-colored bracts.

**1 Drawing Sheet**

Botanical classification: *Origanum vulgare* cultivar Zorba White.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

The present Invention relates to a new and distinct cultivar of Origanum plant, botanically known as *Origanum vulgare*, and hereinafter referred to by the name ‘Zorba White’.

The new Origanum is a product of a planned breeding program conducted by the Inventor in Steenberg, The Netherlands. The objective of the breeding program is to create new compact Origanums with unique flower coloration.

The new Origanum is a naturally-occurring whole plant mutation of a proprietary selection of *Origanum vulgare* identified as PH96, not patented. The new Origanum was discovered and selected as a single plant within a population of plants of the selection PH96 in 1997 in a controlled environment in Steenberg, The Netherlands. The new Origanum was selected on the basis of its compact plant habit and white-colored flowers and light green-colored bracts.

Asexual reproduction of the new cultivar by terminal cuttings taken in a controlled environment in Steenberg, The Netherlands since 1997, has shown that the unique features of this new Origanum are stable and reproduced true to type in successive generations.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

Plants of the cultivar Zorba White have not been observed under all possible environmental conditions. The phenotype may vary somewhat with variations in environment and culture such as temperature, light intensity, and daylength without, however, any variance in genotype.

The following traits have been repeatedly observed and are determined to be the unique characteristics of ‘Zorba White’. These characteristics in combination distinguish ‘Zorba White’ as a new and distinct cultivar:

1. Compact and low spreading plant habit.
2. Freely branching growth habit.
3. Aromatic dark green foliage.

4. White-colored flowers subtended by light green-colored flower bracts.

Plants of the new Origanum differ from plants of the parent selection primarily in plant habit as plants of the new Origanum are much more compact. In addition, flowers of plants of the new Origanum are more conspicuous than flowers of plants of the selection PH96.

Plants of the new Origanum differ from plants of the cultivar 4838, U.S. Plant patent application Ser. No. 10/171, 831, primarily in flower bract color as plants of the cultivar 4838 have red purple-colored flower bracts.

Plants of the new Origanum can be compared to plants of the cultivar Rosenkuppel, not patented. In side-by-side comparisons conducted in Steenberg, The Netherlands, plants of the new Origanum and the cultivar Rosenkuppel differed in the following characteristics:

1. Plants of the new Origanum were more vigorous than plants of the cultivar Rosenkuppel.
2. Plants of the new Origanum had dark green-colored leaves whereas plants of the cultivar Rosenkuppel had brownish green-colored leaves.
3. Flower bracts of plants of the new Origanum were light green in color whereas flower bracts of plants of the cultivar Rosenkuppel were dark red in color.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS**

The accompanying colored photographs illustrate the overall appearance of the new cultivar, showing the colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of this type. Colors in the photographs may differ slightly from the color values cited in the detailed botanical description which accurately describe the colors of the new Origanum.

The photograph at the top of the sheet comprises a side perspective view of a typical flowering plant of ‘Zorba White’.

The photograph at the bottom of the sheet comprises a close-up view of typical leaves and flowers of ‘Zorba White’.



## DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

In the following description, color references are made to The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart except where general terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used. Plants grown for 12-weeks in 15-cm containers were used for the photographs and following description. Plants were grown in a polycarbonate-covered greenhouse in Lompoc, Calif. during the late winter/early spring with day temperatures ranging from 18 to 24° C., night temperatures ranging from 16 to 18° C., and light levels ranging from 4,000 to 8,000 foot-candles.

Botanical classification: *Origanum vulgare* cultivar Zorba White.

Parentage: Naturally-occurring whole plant mutation of proprietary selection of *Origanum vulgare* identified as PH96, not patented.

Propagation:

*Type cutting*.—Terminal cuttings.

*Time to initiate roots*.—About 10 days at 18° C.

*Time to develop roots*.—About 20 days at 18° C.

*Root description*.—Fibrous.

*Rooting habit*.—Freely branching.

Plant description:

*Form*.—Compact and low spreading growth habit. Lateral branches initially upright, but tend to cascade with subsequent development. Freely branching with about 14 lateral branches. Vigorous.

*Plant height*.—About 30 cm.

*Plant diameter*.—About 72 cm.

*Lateral branches*.—Length: About 50 cm. Diameter: About 4 mm. Internode length: Vegetative branches: About 2 cm. Flowering branches: About 8 cm. Strength: Moderately strong. Texture: Fine pubescence. Color: 144A to 144B.

*Foliage description*.—Arrangement: Opposite, simple. Quantity per lateral branch: About 20. Length: About 4.5 cm. Width: About 3 cm. Shape: Rounded elliptic. Apex: Rounded. Base: Acute. Margin: Entire. Texture: Upper surface: Glabrous; glandular. Lower surface: Pubescent; glandular. Venation pattern: Arcuate. Fragrance: Aromatic, sweet herb-like. Petiole length: About 2.3 cm. Petiole diameter: About 2 mm. Color: Young foliage, upper surface: 138A. Young foliage, lower surface: 144A. Mature foliage, upper surface: 147A. Mature foliage, lower surface: 147B. Venation, upper and lower surfaces: 147C. Petiole: 146D.

Flower description:

*Flower type and habit*.—Small single bilabiate flowers arranged in terminal and axillary panicles; individual flowers face upward or outward depending on position in the panicle. Freely flowering; more than 200 flowers and flower buds per flowering branch. Flowers not persistent.

*Natural flowering season*.—Summer and fall, flowering continuous during this period.

*Flower longevity on the plant*.—About 4 to 7 days.

*Fragrance*.—Not detected.

*Terminal panicle height*.—About 2 cm.

*Terminal panicle diameter*.—About 1.5 cm.

*Flowers*.—Appearance: Zygomorphic; bilabiate.

Length: About 5 mm. Diameter: About 4 mm. Depth: About 7 mm.

*Flower buds (showing color)*.—Length: About 5 mm.

Diameter: About 2.25 mm. Shape: Elongated ovoid.

Color: 155C to 155D.

*Corolla*.—Petal arrangement/appearance: Bilabiate; five petals, upper two petals fused at base and lower three petals fused at base. Petal length: Upper petals: About 6 mm. Lower petals: About 7.5 mm. Petal width: Upper petals: About 2 mm. Lower petals: About 4 mm. Petal shape: Roughly oval. Petal apex: Rounded. Petal margin: Entire. Petal texture: Smooth, satiny. Petal color: Upper and lower surfaces, when opening: 155C. Upper and lower surfaces, fully opened: More white than 155D.

*Calyx*.—Quantity/arrangement: One single calyx tube per flower; five fused sepals. Length: About 4 mm. Diameter: About 2 mm. Shape: Tubular or cup-shaped. Apex: Acute. Texture: Slightly pubescent. Color: Immature, upper and lower surfaces: 146D. Mature, upper and lower surfaces: 146D.

*Bracts*.—Quantity/arrangement: One bract subtends each flower. Length: About 4 mm. Diameter: About 2.5 mm. Shape: Elongated ovate. Color, upper and lower surfaces: 144B.

*Peduncles*.—Length: About 5 cm. Diameter: About 1.75 mm. Strength: Strong. Angle: Terminals, erect; axillary, about 45° from vertical. Color: 147D.

*Pedicels*.—Length: About 1.5 mm. Diameter: Less than 1 mm. Strength: Moderately strong. Angle: Terminals, erect; axillary, about 45° from vertical. Color: 146D.

*Reproductive organs*.—Stamens: Quantity: Four per flower. Anther shape: Ovoid. Anther length: Less than 1 mm. Anther color: 155D. Pollen amount: Scarce. Pollen color: 155D. Pistils: Quantity: One per flower. Pistil length: About 1 cm. Stigma shape: Bi-lobed. Stigma color: 145D. Style length: About 9 mm. Style color: 145D. Ovary color: 145C.

*Seed/fruit*.—Seed nor fruit production has not been observed.

Disease/pest resistance: Plants of the new *Origanum* have not been noted to be resistant to pathogens or pests common to *Origanum*.

Weather tolerance: Plants of the new *Origanum* have been observed to be tolerant to rain, wind and temperatures ranging from 1 to 30° C.

I claim:

1. A new and distinct cultivar of *Origanum* plant named 'Zorba White', as illustrated and described.

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